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Date: April 26, 2005

Mr. Mike Carrier
Natural Resources Policy Advisor
Governor's Natural Resource Office
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Mr. Carrier:

In order to assist the State of Oregon in its effort to complete a comprehensive status assessment of the Oregon Coast coho, the Region 6 Forest Service (FS) and Oregon Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are pleased to submit the enclosed report. The report summarizes the way in which the Northwest Forest Plan's (NWFP) aquatic program has been applied to FS and BLM administered lands within the Oregon Coast coho Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU). In addition, the report describes how the NWFP addresses factors for decline, relevant Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team reports, and the Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts (PECE). The BLM and FS offer speculative comments as to the NWFP's effects on coho but at this time do not provide a critical assessment of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) effects on coho salmon in this report.

The NWFP has guided land management activities on FS and BLM administered lands throughout the range of the northern spotted owl since 1994. As part of the plan, the ACS was developed to help restore and maintain the ecological health of watersheds and associated aquatic ecosystems, such as salmon and steelhead habitat, on public lands. The report describes the four ACS components—Riparian Reserves, Key Watersheds, Watershed Assessments, and Watershed Restoration—and how they have been applied (distribution and extent) within the ESU. Here are a few highlights taken from the report:

- **Riparian Reserves** – Twenty percent of the coho-bearing streams (1,342 miles) within the ESU are managed under the Riparian Reserve System, whereby 300-foot buffers have been established on both sides of such streams solely to protect and improve fish habitat and other riparian dependent resources.
- **Key Watersheds** - Thirty-four Key Watersheds are distributed across public lands within the ESU, totaling 1,358,105 acres, many of which do or will serve as refugia for Oregon Coast coho. Key Watersheds can provide, or are expected to provide, high quality fish habitat, serving as a refuge network for salmon and other fish species.
- **Watershed Assessment** – One-hundred and fourteen watershed assessments have been completed for BLM and/or FS-administered lands throughout the ESU. The watershed assessments provide the context for fish habitat protection and aquatic restoration activities.



- **Watershed Restoration** – From 1998 to 2003, the FS and BLM allocated \$22,115,962 for aquatic restoration projects in the ESU and a significant portion of these funds have direct affects on the coho.

The report also points out that the Key Watersheds are focal areas for watershed assessments and restoration, creating a more functional network of federal-land refugia throughout the ESU. Furthermore, the report provides evidence which suggests that many of the 21,312 miles of non-coho-bearing streams originating on or flowing through FS and BLM administered lands can be major contributors of large wood to coho-bearing streams on both federal and non-federal lands.

Also included in the report are the FS and BLM responses to the PECE questions. Our responses take into account the NWFP conservation efforts being made to protect Oregon Coast coho and demonstrate that such efforts have been effectively implemented and will continue to be into the foreseeable future.

In short, the ACS has guided fisheries management on lands administered by the FS and BLM in the Oregon Coast Coho ESU since 1994, providing significant protection and restoration of aquatic habitats. As a result, we believe that the ACS has and will continue to be a cornerstone to the recovery of the Oregon Coast coho. Ultimately, the ACS is most effective when it has been integrated with the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. The partnerships forged between the FS/BLM and state agencies, watershed councils, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and others within the ESU have helped make this integration a reality; and it is our hope that the results of the State's status assessment will strengthen these partnerships, thereby resulting in more focused assessment and restoration efforts and increased opportunities to recover and sustain the Oregon Coast coho.

If you have any questions about specific items in the BLM/FS report, please contact BLM representative Al Doelker at 503-808-6067 or FS representative Scott Peets at 541-750-7181.

Sincerely,

/s/ [Linda Goodman](#)

LINDA GOODMAN
Regional Forester
Region 6
USDA Forest Service

/s/ [Elaine M. Brong](#)

ELAINE M. BRONG
State Director
Oregon/Washington
USDI Bureau of Land Management

Enclosure: Northwest Forest Plan Aquatic Conservation Strategy

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